

**INFLUENCE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT ON
PEER VICTIMIZATION AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN EMOHUA
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA**

Associate Prof. Bruno U. Onyekuru

University Of Portharcourt Post Office, Portharcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.

08064360369

ABSTRACT: *Emotional intelligence and social adjustment are positive psychological constructs which can help to establish positive attitude and warm relationship among people. So students are expected to imbibe these virtuous constructs so as to relate well with one another and to avoid bullying and antisocial behaviours. Therefore, this correlational study investigated the influence of emotional intelligence and social adjustment on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria. A sample of 372 students from public secondary schools in the area was composed from a population of 1548 senior secondary school (1&2) students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria using simple random sampling technique and proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection is Emotional Intelligence, Social Adjustment and Peer Victimization Questionnaire. The instrument validated through the assistance of three experts in Counselling Psychology has reliability coefficients obtained through Cronbach alpha technique in the range of 0.68-0.82. The results of the study show that emotional intelligence had a high negative and significant influence on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State; social adjustment had a high negative and significant influence on peer victimization among secondary school students; emotional intelligence and social adjustment had a negative and significant joint influence on peer victimization. Based on the findings, it was recommended that counsellors, teachers, parents/guardians and religious leaders should make spirited effort to inculcate the virtue of emotional intelligence and social adjustment in the students. This they can do by preaching virtuous principles such as conscientiousness, love, selflessness, and consideration for others among young people including the students.*

KEYWORDS: emotional intelligence, peer victimization, antisocial behavior, pro-social behavior, bullying, victims, perpetrators, consequences

INTRODUCTION

Peer victimization has been defined as by Adekunle (2010) as the experience among the children of being a target of aggressive behaviour of other children who may not be siblings or age mates. It is the act of an unprovoked attack that causes harm of a psychological, social or physical nature (Smith, 2018). It is a problem that occurs when someone is exposed repeatedly and over time to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons with the hostile or malicious intent (Lumsden, 2016). It is a pervasive bullying act in which a person or a group of persons direct aggressive behaviours designed to cause harm towards another person.

Perpetrators of victimization are usually more powerful than their victims. They strike fear in the minds of their victims who are usually weaker and hapless. Peer victimization can be in form of physical victimization in which perpetrators abuse the victims using physical means such as slapping, punching, kicking, spitting, etc (Adefunke, 2018). It may be of verbal form in which the perpetrators use abusive words on the victims. It can also be in form of social manipulation in which the perpetrators work concertedly with other people to undermine and cause harm to the victims. Peer victimization can also occur by attack not directly on the person but on his property so as to hurt him.

Irrespective of its nature or form, peer victimization results to physical, emotional or social harm. Therefore, the consequences of peer victimization are grievous. It strikes a long time fear in the minds of the victims making them timid, panicky and isolated. The victims appear stigmatized, traumatized, worried and withdrawn. Drop in self-confidence and self-esteem is a hallmark of peer victimization to the victims. Perpetrators of peer victimization are apparently people without honour. They are people who have issues with good sense of judgment and right code of conduct. They are usually lawless. High rate of substance abuse is common among them. They indulge in antisocial behaviour or conduct disorder and may grow up to become adult criminals.

In school, peer victimization causes lateness to school and in extreme cases, result to absenteeism among the victims. Participation in academic activities is low among the victims of peer victimization. Emerson (2017) reported low academic achievement among the perpetrators and victims of peer victimization. There is a high rate of dropout among victims of peer victimization.

Some factors have been reported to exert some influence on peer victimization. Such factors may include but not limited to locus of control, self-concept, self-esteem, emotional intelligence, emotional stability, school adjustment and social adjustment. However, the major independent variables that are reviewed in this work are emotional intelligence and social adjustment. Emotional intelligence was defined as the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). According to Egbule (2009), emotional intelligence is the ability to validly reason with emotions and to use emotions to enhance thought. It involves the ability to utilize emotional knowledge to accurately perceive, understand, generate, access and assist feelings or emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth. People that are emotionally intelligent possess a clear understanding of the feelings, and can restore their moods more quickly before damage can ensue than the individuals with low levels of emotional intelligence (Ciarrochi, Chan & Caputi, 2000).

Mishra and Mohapatra (2011) assert that there are three parameters of emotional intelligence which are emotional competence, emotional maturity and emotional sensitivity. Emotional competence indicates one's ability to effectively respond to emotional stimuli elicited by various situations, having high self-esteem and optimism. Emotional maturity is reflected in the behavioural pattern exhibited by individuals while dealing with oneself and others and the capability to effectively evaluate emotions of oneself and others, balancing and adapting the state

of heart and mind flexibly. Emotional sensitivity indicates one's capacity to effectively understand intensity of emotional arousal, managing the immediate environment. It is the ability to have a regard and respect to other people's emotions rather than ignoring them. Emotionally intelligent individuals use their emotions to engage in intelligent thoughts and also possess the ability to think intelligently about their emotions with a view to using them effectively (Mayer, Salvey & Caruso, 2000). Emotional intelligence focuses more on emotional problem solving, rather than on the social, political or verbal aspects inherent in the social intelligence construction (Mayer et al., 2000). According to Goleman (2004), the most important element of emotional intelligence is empathy which is the ability to accurately perceive emotions in others and sense what they are feeling.

Social adjustment was defined by Ray and Elliott (2016) as a general process in which the individual changes response pattern as the dimension of the environment changes. It was also defined as the ability to adapt to the environment along with human beings and at the same time satisfy one's needs and meet most of the demands (Mazaheri, Baghiyan & Fatehizadeh, 2016). It is the social ability of an individual to fit and adapt in a social system so as to accommodate himself taking cognizance of the fact that human beings cannot survive in isolation in the society. There is interdependence and inter-relationship among people in the society as they strive to satisfy their needs. In every social system, people co-exist and do a lot of things in common. Therefore, they need to ensure they do not act in any way to undermine the interests of one another. By extension, they need to ensure peaceful coexistence of one another.

In school, social adjustment is needed to ensure cordial relationships among peers, between students and staff. It is needed so as to promote positive attitude to academic work among the students. It is also needed to promote positive attitude towards school extra curricular activities as socially adjusted students obey school rules and regulation, show respect to students, teachers and constituted authority. They protect the school and individuals' property, and exhibit pro-social behaviours. Conversely, socially maladjusted students can be recalcitrant and exhibit bullying and antisocial behaviour. Shaka (2011) carried out a study on the influence of emotional intelligence on job performance among high school teachers using a sample of 200 teachers randomly drawn from 10 high schools in Debrece, Hungary. Result of the study showed significant relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance ($r = 0.78$, $P < 0.05$). Barranta (2011) carried out a study to investigate emotional intelligence and personality traits of Filipino Seafarers and their attitude towards work environment. The result of the study indicated high positive relationship between emotional intelligence and attitude towards work environment. Apama (2017) investigated the influence of emotional intelligence on job acquisition and progression using a sample of 200 employees from primary and secondary schools in Asaba. The results of the study showed that emotional intelligence had influence on job acquisition and progression.

Kamah (2017) investigated the influence of emotional intelligence and self-esteem on peer victimization and found that emotional intelligence had a negative and significant influence on peer victimization. Self-esteem also had a negative and significant influence on peer victimization. Emotional intelligence and self-esteem had a joint and significant negative influence on peer victimization. In a study conducted by Ezeh and Anyaorah (2017) to investigate the influence of

social adjustment and self-concept on peer victimization, it was that social adjustment had a negative and significant influence on peer victimization. Social adjustment and self-concept jointly had a significant negative influence on peer victimization. Umor (2016) conducted a study on the relationship among social adjustment, self-efficacy and peer victimization of secondary school students in Eket, Ikwa Ibom State of Nigeria. The results of the study revealed that social adjustment had a negative and significant relationship with peer victimization and there was a negative and significant relationship between self-efficacy and peer victimization. It is the scarcity of research on the influence of emotional intelligence and social adjustment on peer victimization among the secondary school students especially the students of public secondary schools in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State that necessitated this study.

Statement of the problem

Peer victimization is an ill wind that blows no one any good. It is touted to have impacted on the lives of the victims as well as the perpetrators. In secondary school, students who experience peer victimization are said to exhibit low level of self-concept, self-esteem and self-confidence. They loathe academic activities and are associated with lateness to school and truancy. There is a high dropout rate and low academic performance among victims and perpetrators of peer victimization. Peer victimization is said to be influenced by some factors among which are emotional intelligence and social adjustment. However, it is uncertain that students who rate high on emotional intelligence and social adjustment will equally rate high or low on peer victimization. Hence, this study investigated the influence of emotional intelligence and social adjustment on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research questions

The following research questions were answered in this study

1. What is the influence of emotional intelligence on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State?
2. What is the influence of social adjustment on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State?
3. What is the joint influence of emotional intelligence and social adjustment on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in this study at 0.05 alpha level

1. There is no significant influence of emotional intelligence on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State
2. Social adjustment has no significant influence on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State
3. There is no significant joint influence of emotional intelligence and social adjustment on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State

METHODOLOGY

The design of this study is correlational. From the 24 public secondary schools situated in Emohua Local Government Area of the state, 12 schools were selected for study using simple random sampling technique. Then, of the 1548 senior secondary (1&2) students, a sample of 372 students was drawn using proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection is Emotional Intelligence, Social Adjustment and Peer Victimization Questionnaire. The instrument was researcher-made, but was vetted by experts in the field of counselling psychology. The reliability indices of the instrument as obtained using Cronbach alpha technique were 0.76, 0.68, 0.82 and 0.74 for emotional intelligence section, social adjustment section, peer victimization section and overall respectively. The instrument is of 4-point Likert format of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree.

Each section of the instrument (emotional intelligence, social adjustment and peer victimization) contained 10 items. The minimum point obtainable by a student in each section is 0 while the maximum point obtainable by a student is 40. The data generated from this instrument were analyzed using regression statistical tool.

RESULTS

RQ1: What is the influence of emotional intelligence on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Research question 1 was answered using coefficient of regression. The results are as shown in table 1.

Table 1: Coefficient of regression (R) for the influence of emotional intelligence on peer victimization

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
-0.839	0.703	0.703

Table 1 shows that the value of coefficient of regulation is -0.839. The square of coefficient of regulation is 0.703. The adjusted square of coefficient of regulation is 0.703. The value of coefficient of regulation (-0.839) shows that emotional intelligence had a high negative influence on peer victimization. The value of adjusted square of coefficient of regulation (0.703) shows that 70.3 percent change in peer victimization can be accounted for by emotional intelligence.

HO1: There is no significant influence of emotional intelligence on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State

Hypothesis 1 was tested using t-test associated with regression analysis and the results are shown in table 2

Table 2: t-value for the influence of emotional intelligence on peer victimization among students

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	48.749	0.841		57.982	0.00
Emotional intelligence	-0.961	0.032	-0.839	29.623	0.00

Table 2 shows that value of standardized beta coefficient is -0.839. The t-value for emotional intelligence is 29.623 which is significant at 0.00 alpha level and also significant at 0.05 alpha level. Since the calculated t-value is significant at 0.05 alpha level, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is a negative significant influence of emotional intelligence on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State.

The unstandardized B coefficients shows that the predictive model for the influence of emotional intelligence on peer victimization is given by $48.749 - 0.961EI = PV$, where EI stands for emotional intelligence and PV for peer victimization

RQ2: What is the influence of social adjustment on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Research question 2 was answered using coefficient of regression and the results are shown in table 3

Table 3: Coefficient of regression (R) for the influence of social adjustment on peer victimization

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
-0.768	0.591	0.589

From table 3, it can be seen that coefficient of regression is -0.768. The square of coefficient of regression is 0.591 and the adjusted square of coefficient of regression is 0.589. The value of coefficient of regression (-0.768) shows that social adjustment has a high negative influence on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State. The value of adjusted square of coefficient of regression (0.589) shows that social adjustment accounts for 58.9 percent of variation in peer victimization.

HO2: Social adjustment has no significant influence on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State

Hypothesis 2 was tested by the use of t-value associated with regression analysis. The results are as presented in table 4.

Table 4: t-value for the influence of social adjustment on peer victimization among students

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	45.649	.942		48.458	0.00
Social adjustment	-0.812	0.035	-0.768	23.102	0.00

Table 4 shows that the beta value is -0.768. The calculated t-value for social adjustment is 23.102 which is significant at 0.00 alpha level and also significant at 0.05 alpha level. Since the calculated t-value is significant at 0.05 alpha level, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that social adjustment has a significant influence on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State. The predictive model for the influence of social adjustment on peer victimization is given by $PV = 45.649 - 0.812SA$, where PV is peer victimization and SA is social adjustment.

RQ3: What is the joint influence of emotional intelligence and social adjustment on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Research question 3 was answered using coefficient of regression. The results are presented in table 5

Table 5: Coefficient of regression (R) for the joint influence of emotional intelligence and social adjustment on peer victimization

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
-0.866	0.750	0.749

From table 5, it can be clearly seen that the coefficient of regression is -0.866 which shows that emotional intelligence and social adjustment jointly had a high negative influence on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State. The square of coefficient of regression is 0.750. The adjusted square of coefficient of regression is 0.749. The value of the adjusted square of coefficient of regression (0.749) implies that emotional intelligence and social adjustment jointly account for 74.9 percent variation in peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State.

HO3: There is no significant joint influence of emotional intelligence and social adjustment on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State

Hypothesis 3 was tested using ANOVA associated with multiple regression analysis and the results are presented in table 6.

Table 6: F-value for the joint influence of emotional intelligence and social adjustment on peer victimization among students

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	22327.632	2	11163.816	554.258	0.00
Residual	7432.368	369	20.142		
Total	29760.0	371			

Table 6 shows that the mean square regression is 11163.816. The mean square residual is 20.142. The degrees of freedom regression, residual and total are 2, 369 and 371 respectively. The calculated f-value is 554.258 which is significant at 0.05 alpha level and also significant at 0.05 alpha level. Since the calculated f-value is significant at 0.05 alpha level, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is a significant joint influence of emotional intelligence and social adjustment on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State

The predictive model for the joint influence of emotional intelligence and social adjustment on peer victimization is given by $PV = 50.63 - 0.685EI - 0.342SA$ where PV is peer victimization, EI is emotional intelligence and SA is social adjustment.

DISCUSSION

It was found that emotional intelligence had a high negative and significant influence on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State. The finding that emotional intelligence had a negative influence on peer victimization among students is in agreement with the findings of Kamah (2017) which reported that emotional intelligence had a negative and significant influence on peer victimization. The finding that emotional intelligence had a negative influence on peer victimization among students can be explained from the fact that emotional intelligence helps an individual to validly reason with emotions and to use emotions to enhance thought. It helps people to utilize emotional knowledge to accurately perceive, understand, generate, access and assist feelings or emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth. Hence, people that are emotionally intelligent possess a clear understanding of the feelings, and can restore their moods more quickly before damage can ensue than those with low levels of emotional intelligence. As positive psychological construct, emotional intelligence has a negative influence on peer victimization which is a negative psychological construct.

It was found that social adjustment had a high negative and significant influence on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State. The finding that social adjustment had a negative influence on peer victimization among students is in line with the findings of Ezech and Anyaorah (2017) and Umor (2016) both of which reported that social adjustment had a negative and significant influence on peer victimization. The finding that social adjustment had a negative influence on peer victimization among students can be best explained from the fact that social adjustment is needed to ensure cordial relationships among peers, between students and staff. It is needed so as to promote positive attitude to academic

work among the students. Socially adjusted students obey school rules and regulation, show respect to students, teachers and constituted authority and shun antisocial behaviours. They protect the school and individuals' property, and exhibit pro-social behaviours. As positive psychological construct, social adjustment has a negative influence on peer victimization which is a negative psychological construct.

It was also found that emotional intelligence and social adjustment had a negative and significant joint influence on peer victimization. The finding that emotional intelligence and social adjustment had a negative and significant joint influence on peer victimization is in line with the findings of Kamah (2017) which reported that emotional intelligence and self-esteem had a joint and significant negative influence on peer victimization. The finding that emotional intelligence and social adjustment had a negative and significant joint influence on peer victimization can be explained from the fact that emotional intelligence and social adjustment are positive construct which can exert concerted effects on peer victimization behaviours of young people.

Implication of the findings

Emotional intelligence and social adjustment have been found to negatively influence peer victimization among the students. This implies that students who are emotionally intelligent and who are socially adjusted are less likely to participate in peer victimization. Hence, emotional intelligence and social adjustment are needed by the students to exhibit or manifest pro-social behaviours including avoidance of bullying, pilfering, arson, peer victimization and other types of antisocial behaviour. Students who rate high in conduct disorder and peer victimization are most likely to have low academic achievement, may drop out of school, will grow up to contribute less in the development of the society, may possibly engage in vices and become adult criminals in future.

CONCLUSION

Emotional intelligence and social adjustment have been found in this study to have a negative influence on peer victimization. Hence, students who rate high on emotional intelligence and social adjustment will definitely rate low on peer victimization scale. Conversely, students who rate low on emotional intelligence and social adjustment will definitely rate high on peer victimization scale.

Recommendation

From the findings of this study, it is recommended that counsellors should make spirited effort to inculcate the spirit of emotional intelligence and social adjustment in the students. Teachers, parents/guardians and religious leaders should also help to inculcate emotional intelligence and social adjustment in the students. This they can do by preaching virtuous principles such conscientiousness, love, tolerance, selflessness, and consideration for others among young people including the students.

References

- Adefunke, C. A. (2018). Forms of peer victimization. *International Journal of Educational Review*, 12 (10), 186-192
- Adekunle, A. J. (2010). Victimization among adolescents: Matters arising. *Journal of Counselling Psychology*, 8 (12), 113-120
- Apama, E. P. (2007). Factors influencing job performance and satisfaction. Retrieved May 24, 2016, from <http://www.economist.com/mode/12972095?storyid=129709>.
- Barranta, C. M. (2011). Emotional intelligence and personality traits of Filipino seafarers and their attitude towards work environment. Retrieved May 24, 2016, from <http://www.academia.edu/4550783>
- Ciarrochi, J. V., Chan, A. V. & Caputi, P. (2000). A critical evaluation of the emotional intelligence construct. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 28, 539-651
- Egbule, J. F. (2009). *Psychology of adjustment and crisis counseling*. Benin: Goodnews Express
- Emerson, L. N. (2017). Influence of peer victimization on students' academic achievement. *Journal of Counselling Psychology*, 14 (16), 18-26
- Ezeh, V. M. & Anyaorah, B. U. (2017). Influence of social adjustment and self-concept on peer victimization. *Journal of Counselling Psychology*, 14 (8), 164-170
- Golman, D. (2004). *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. New York: Bantam Books
- Kamah, C. C. (2017). Influence of emotional intelligence and self-esteem on peer victimization. *Journal of Learning and Instruction in Developing Areas*, 22 (15), 278-282
- Lumsden, C. R. (2016). Cases against peer victimization. *Journal of education and Development*, 12 (8), 201-209
- Mayer J. D., Solvey, P. & Caruso, D. (2000). *Models of emotional intelligence: Handbook of intelligence*. New York: Cambridge University Press
- Mazahevi, A., Baghiyan, I. & Fatehizade, M. (2006). The effects of group training of self esteem on the social adjustment of the university students. *Daneshvar Raftear Science Research Periodical*, 13 (16), 49-56
- Mishrap, P. S. & Mohapatra, A. K. (2011). Relevance of emotional intelligence for effective job performance. *Empirical Study Vikalapa*, 35 (1), 40-60
- Shaka, A. S. (2011). Using emotional intelligence to help college students succeed in work. *Journal of Employment Counselling*, 44 (4), 171-178
- Ray, C.H. & Elliott, S.N. (2016). Social adjustment and academic achievement. A predictive model for students with diverse academic and behaviour competencies. *School Psychology Review*, 35(3). 493-501.
- Smith, L. T. (2018). Child victimization and child rights protection. *International Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 7 (10), 99-106
- Solvey, P. & Mayer J. D. (1990). Emotional intelligence: Imagination. *Cognition and Personality*, 9 (3), 195-201
- Umor, A. U. (2016), Relationship among social adjustment, self-efficacy and peer victimization of secondary school students in Eket, Akwa Ibom State. *Journal of Psychology of Learning*, 19 (10), 73-81